



**Kevin McCauley**  
Editor-in-Chief

# O'Dwyer's

The Inside News of PR & Marketing Communications



271 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016  
212/679-2471. Fax: 212/683-2750  
[www.odwyerpr.com](http://www.odwyerpr.com); [jobs.odwyerpr.com](mailto:jobs.odwyerpr.com)

May 16, 2022 Vol. 55 No. 20

## **FORT COLLINS FLOATS BRANDING RFP**

The city of Fort Collins, Colorado is requesting proposals from marketing agencies with place-branding expertise.



The northern Centennial State city, which is home to Colorado State University and whose population is about 170,000, is seeking an agency that can collaborate with Visit Fort Collins, the city's destination marketing organization, to develop and create a brand that

tells the Fort Collins story in an effort to recruit and retain investors, businesses, retailers, visitors, students, talent, faculty and residents.

Scope of the work includes development of the community brand; activation, implementation and ongoing promotion of the brand; and research.

Work for the awarded firm is slated to commence in July and has a projected timeline between eight and 12 months.

Proposals are due by 4:00 p.m. (MST) on June 10 and should be submitted electronically (in PDF format) to vice president of marketing Katy Schneider, [Katy@ftcollins.com](mailto:Katy@ftcollins.com).

All agencies that plan to submit a proposal should notify Katy Schneider, [Katy@ftcollins.com](mailto:Katy@ftcollins.com), by May 18. All questions should be also directed to Schneider by May 18.

[Download the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

## **PORTER NOVELLI'S CUSICK TO BRUNSWICK**

Kate Cusick, who most recently was senior partner/global marketing chief at Porter Novelli, will join Brunswick Group on May 16. Based in New York, she will head global marketing.



**Kate Cusick**

The more-than-20-year communications veteran handled Porter's marketing, business development and integrated services, which includes research, analytics, creative, digital and paid media capabilities.

Prior to Porter, Cusick was director of project management and business development at Gardner Nelson

& Partners; brand & integrated marketing director at Product (RED); VP-marketing at New York City Economic Development Corp.; new business development manager at BBDO and producer at MSNBC's "Hardball With Chris Matthews."

Brunswick CEO Neil Wolin said Cusick will help elevate the firm's marketing efforts and bolster its "reputation as the preeminent critical advisory firm globally."

## **REED QUITS CONGRESS FOR PRIME POLICY**

New York Republican Congressman Tom Reed has stepped down from Congress and will join [BCW](#)'s Prime Policy Group government relations shop as vice chairman.

On May 10, Reed from the floor of the House announced he was quitting seven months before the end of his term.

After being accused of [sexual misconduct in March 2021](#) by a then-lobbyist and now second lieutenant in the US Army, Reed announced that he wouldn't seek another term. The Congressman said Nicolette Davis' version of the 2017 encounter that allegedly occurred at an Irish pub in Minneapolis was not accurate.

In Congress since 2010, Reed co-chaired the Problem Solvers Caucus of 24 moderate Republicans and 24 Democrats.

PPG chair Rich Meade said Reed will advise clients on a broad range of issues.



**Tom Reed**

## **GINSBERG CHAIRS NEW PRO-ISRAEL GROUP**

Gary Ginsberg, who worked in the Clinton administration and held top communications jobs at Time Warner, News Corp. and Softbank, chairs the New York Solidarity Network, a \$1,000 annual membership group that will promote pro-Israel leadership and combat antisemitism in NYC.

The [New York Times](#) [likens NYSN](#) to a local version of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. NYSN will counter left-wing efforts, specifically the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, to boycott Israel over its treatment of Palestinians.

Ginsberg was a lawyer in the Clinton White House and the Justice Dept. He then served as executive VP for communications & marketing at Time Warner and senior advisor to CEO Jeff Bewkes, and executive VP-marketing and corporate affairs at News Corp. and counselor to CEO Rupert Murdoch.

Ginsberg exited Softbank in 2021 as senior VP-head of its corporate communications unit.

NYSN has hired Moonshot Strategies as its lobbying firm. Moonshot's co-founders Jenny Sedlis and Jason Ortiz helped run a Super PAC that backed Eric Adams for Mayor.



**Gary Ginsberg**

## **BGR HANDLES FAST-GROWING GUYANA**

BGR Government Affairs has inked a \$35K monthly retainer pact to provide strategic counsel and US outreach to Guyana, the world's fastest-growing economy.



**Irfaan Ali**

The International Monetary Fund forecasts the economy of the former British colony in South America will grow 47 percent this year. Until ExxonMobil discovered oil off the coast of Guyana in 2015, it had ranked among the poorest of South American countries. Hess and China's CNOOC are Exxon-Mobil partners.

Guyana president Irfaan Ali told the *Financial Times* his country is trying to avoid the "oil curse" by investing in healthcare, education and transportation to develop a sustainable economy.

BGR's one-year contract kicked off April 6.

Lester Munson, who was deputy assistant administrator for the US Agency for International Development during the Bush administration, is working on Guyana business.

## **NELSON MOVES TO DISNEY BRANDED TV**

Disney Branded Television has named Katherine Nelson vice president of corporate communications, a newly created position. Before founding her own firm, The Katherine Nelson Group, last year, Nelson was at NBCUniversal, where she led communications for the USA Network, SYFY and Universal Content Productions.



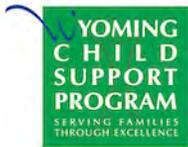
**Katherine Nelson**

At Disney Branded Television, Nelson will be responsible for overall communications strategy in support of the organization's business and executive team.

"She is an exceptional communications executive," said Charissa Gilmore, a longtime Disney exec who was promoted to senior vice president of corporate communications for Disney General Entertainment on May 10.

## **WYOMING SEEKS PR FOR CHILD SUPPORT**

Wyoming is looking for a marketing partner to create a public education program to bolster awareness of its child support program.



The Department of Family Services' Child Support Programs handles issues such as collecting and paying support, accessing professional services and establishing paternity. It wants outreach support in Casper, Cheyenne and other communities targeted at men and women aged 20 through 40.

The selected firm will manage a social media presence on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Google and YouTube.

Wyoming also wants professional services ads placed on referral agencies (Wyoming Bar Assn. and Wyoming Public Radio).

The successful proposer will monitor and implement all of the child support messaging to ensure quality and consistency. Proposals are due May 24.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\).](#)

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

**Rubenstein Public Relations** picks up cannabis metaverse marketing platform **Cannaverse Technologies**. RPR is tasked with utilizing its media relationships and expertise in the blockchain, crypto, metaverse, and cannabis industries to develop corporate messaging and strategize brand positioning for the company. Cannaverse says that Cannaland, its meta marketplace on the blockchain, revolutionizes and connects every facet of the cannabis and hemp communities in a digital "smart" city. "RPR's proficiency and strategic positioning will help Cannaverse Technologies establish our brand and enhance our reputation," said Cannaverse Technologies CEO Mark Bonner.



**Eleven Six** checks in at New York-based hotel properties **NoMo SoHo** and **Royalton Park Avenue**. For NoMo SoHo, as well as its NoMo Kitchen restaurant and cocktail bar, Nina's. Eleven Six will provide services including event promotion, partnership collaborations and managing digital and social channels. The agency will also drive social strategy and generate social media content for Royalton Park Avenue, as well as managing influencer campaigns and partnerships.

**William Mills Agency** adds **FIntegrate Technology**, which provides data-driven portfolio tracking, collections and revenue recovery software and services to financial institutions throughout the US. The agency will assist FIntegrate with a complete rebrand and will design and manage the company's public relations program.

**VSC** has released what it says is the first NFT press release in collaboration with Web3 partner, **Yat Labs**, the inventor of Yats—a self-sovereign identity solution based on emojis. The press release promotes Yat's NFT feature, the 'Magic Mirror,' that lets users connect their wallets to check eligibility for "Gems"—NFTs that serve as a reward for users based on their on-chain history.

**BizCom Associates** adds Museum of Illusions to its client roster. BizCom will support the organization's national and global growth plans with an integrated media relations and digital PR and marketing communications program. A pioneer of the "edutainment" concept, the Museum of Illusions has more than 35 locations in 24 countries worldwide, with another 20 locations slated to open soon. Each location features a variety of optical illusions, holograms, exhibits and interactive illusion rooms based on math, science, art and psychology. "This is an exciting time to support Museum of Illusions as the brand is positioned for major growth globally as demand for unique in-person entertainment continues to increase," said BizCom co-founder and CEO Scott White.



**Gateway Group** signs on to build and manage a strategic investor relations program for **Digital Ally**, which through its subsidiaries, provides video solution technology, human & animal health protection products, healthcare revenue cycle management, ticket brokering and marketing, and event production. Gateway's work will include refining overall company and investment-oriented messaging and corporate positioning, strategic advisory services, and introductions to institutional investors, sell-side analysts, and other key influencers.

## **PR'S TOP SECRET: AGENCY OWNER WEALTH**

As someone who has worked closely with more than a hundred public relations agencies during the past ten years, I'm privy to one of the best-kept secrets in the industry. Most owners of independent public relations agencies, regardless of their size, are very wealthy.



**Art Stevens**

This fact—and it is a fact—doesn't show up in PR agency benchmarking studies, which include the typical salaries of PR agency owners. These owners guard their best-kept secrets zealously and simply report what they consider to be industry-standard salaries. But

the profits they take out in the form of distributions during the course of the year are kept strictly confidential.

So, if a benchmarking study reflects that the industry standard for an agency owner of a \$5 million agency is a salary of, say, \$300,000, you can be sure that this isn't the whole story. Most likely, that individual will be pulling out more than \$1 million a year.

I'm personally aware of one independent PR agency owner who earns more than \$5 million a year. And the agency isn't even among the top twenty in fee billings. This individual earns more than the CEOs of holding company PR agencies. Ah, the joys of growing your own business!

Yet, there comes a point in the lifetime of a PR agency owner when he'd like to sell the agency. The question becomes: How does an agency owner capitalize on the enormous profits the agency has generated in order for him to become as wealthy as he is?

I've come across a number of primary reasons a PR agency owner wants to sell:

He wants to cash out and retire.

He wants to cash out and get into another endeavor altogether.

He wants to jump-start his career by staying on and becoming part of a larger organization.

He wants to stay on but work less.

Taking as an example the owner of a \$5 million agency who takes out about \$1 million a year, how can an acquisition be structured that would accommodate the owner's present income base with a realistic marketplace value? Typical deals are usually based on fee income or bottom line, or both. Typical deals these days are one times net fee income and/or five times the bottom line. So, if an agency is doing \$5 million and it generates a profit of \$750,000 a year, then that agency could be worth around \$5 million.

But if that agency is generating a 30 percent profit and the owner takes \$1 million a year, then in five years that owner would personally take in \$5 million. If he's offered even \$7 million for his agency, it's not economically worthwhile for the owner because he would net just \$2 million for his agency.

So, how can deals be done for agencies generating enormous profits and huge windfalls for their owners? Here are the criteria:

A buyer will offer a generous amount of money upfront and a value of more than two times annual revenue.

A seller will determine how much more he can live with as a net purchase price after he deducts what he himself can

generate by remaining independent.

A seller may want to abandon the headaches of back-of-office responsibility and become part of a larger organization. This seller may compromise on the value of his business in exchange for becoming an integral part of the acquiring organization's management team.

These are some of the ways in which compromises can be made to allow a seller and a buyer to close a transaction when the seller personally generates an enormous income. The seller must be willing to be flexible if the goal is to either exit or enter. Looking at it another way, the seller is already quite rich if he's run the business well. This doesn't mean that he wants to give the business away. What it does mean is that the seller may be so ready for the next major change in his life that he's willing to work with a desired buyer to make a deal happen.

*Art Stevens is Managing Partner of The Stevens Group, a consulting firm that facilitates mergers and acquisitions in both the PR agency space as well as digital and interactive firms. He founded and headed the New York PR agency LobsenzStevens for more than twenty years.*

## **GRAND RAPIDS NEEDS CITIZEN BUDGET PR**

Grand Rapids, Michigan's second largest city with more than 200K people, is looking for a firm to increase awareness of and participation in its participatory budget process.

The initiative is designed to empower residents to determine how public funds are spent.

The selected firm will handle content development; marketing and measurement; media/influencer relations; advertising; graphics/video production; and social media.

Due to the expected collaboration and idea-sharing with various city agencies, the communications partner is expected to establish a local office, preferably in Grand Rapids.

Grand Rapids has budgeted \$30K for the nine-month project.

Responses are due May 26. Interested firms should register with the MITN Purchasing Group at <http://www.bidnetdirect.com/mitn>.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\).](#)

## **FINN DRAFTS GROEN FOR SPORTS TEAM**

Finn Partners has drafted Zach Groen, who held PR posts for the Philadelphia Eagles, Green Bay Packers and New England Patriots National Football League teams, as VP in its sports division.

During his six-year run with the Eagles, the team captured its only Super Bowl victory in 2017.

As PR manager, Groen promoted players, coaches and executives and oversaw media credentialing for home games played at Lincoln Financial Field, including the 2017 NFC championship game.

Most recently, Groen was director of communications for the Big Ten Conference, working on PA matters and championship games for its football and basketball teams.

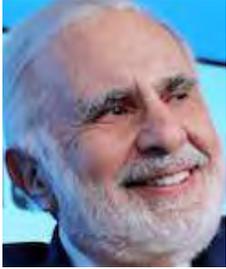
Based in Chicago, Groen works closely with sports division senior partner John Acunto and VP Matt Saler.



**Zach Groen**

## **ICAHN USES LONGACRE TO HIT MCDONALD'S**

Carl Icahn is using Longacre Square Partners in his quest to place two directors on McDonald's board at its May 26 annual meeting.



**Carl Icahn**

The corporate investor has selected Maisie Ganzler of the Bon Appetit Management Co., and Leslie Samuelrich of Green Century Capital Management to support his effort to help the fast-feeder "realize its ESG potential," especially in the area of animal welfare.

They will replace Hershey Co. CEO Richard Lenny and Sheila Penrose, chair of McDonald's governance, sustainability & corporate social responsibility committee.

Icahn wants McDonald's to require pork suppliers to move to crate-free production and set timelines for doing so.

The company says that demand is "completely unfeasible" and would require it to secure 300-400 times more animals housed in crate-free systems to keep its supply chain running.

That would dramatically increase costs and place a burden on the company and its suppliers, according to the company.

Longacre's Charlotte Kiaie and Bela Kirpalani are working the media for Icahn.

## **HUGHES EXITS IMRE FOR RUDER FINN**

Lindsay Hughes has joined [Ruder Finn](#) as executive VP of its New York healthcare practice.

She spent 17 years at Imre, exiting in March as executive VP-client experience.



**Lindsay Hughes**

Hughes has done brand reputation management, marketing and executive communications work for companies such as Johnson & Johnson, GlaxoSmithKline, AstraZeneca and Bristol Myers Squibb.

She will report to Christie Anbar, managing director of RF's healthcare practice.

Ruder Finn is No. 5 in [O'Dwyer's rankings of healthcare firms](#) with 2021 fees of \$45M.

[Imre](#) holds the No. 8 slot with \$34.8M in fees.

## **MERCURY WORKS DC FOR CHINA'S YEALINK**

Mercury Public Affairs has signed on China's Yealink Network Technology Co. as a client to introduce it to elected officials and policymakers in Washington.



Yealink is a top producer of video conferencing and voice communications equipment.

It teamed with Verizon Business last year to introduce the One Talk T67LTE wireless desk phone, which the partners billed as the first advanced desk phone with embedded 4G/LTE cellular technology available in the US.

Former Senator David Vitter (R-LA) and Congressman Toby Moffett (D-CT) spearhead Mercury's Yealink team.

They are joined by Peter Kusic, who was senior sanctions policy director at the Treasury Dept.'s Office of Foreign Assets Control; Bryan Lanza, communications director for the Trump transition team; and John Lonergan, aide to ex-New York governor George Pataki.

Omnicom owns Mercury.

## **NEWS OF FIRMS**

[ICR](#) launches ICR Event Planning & Management. The new division builds on the agency's experience developing and managing the annual ICR Conference, which averages more than 3,000 attendees and 300 presenting companies. It is focused on providing the technology, logistics and management to support virtual or in-person event needs for such events as analyst or investor days, retail investor webinars, shareholder events, annual meetings and programmed conferences. "Our team not only brings the latest techniques in developing multi-platform events, but a deep understanding of how to reach, aggregate, and engage critical stakeholders," said ICR co-founder and CEO Tom Ryan.



**Krupp Communications** rebrands as Krupp. In addition to the new name, the rebrand includes a new website and brand identity. Founded in 1996 by CEO Heidi Krupp, the firm has expanded from a one-person shop to a fully remote global agency with full-time staff and partners in such locations as Maui, Los Angeles, Arizona, Chicago, the DC area and the New York tri-state area. In addition to that transition, the agency made investments in technology and data analysis that have led to the establishment of an insights and analytics team to better assess changing market trends.

**The Diversity Marketing Consortium** reaches \$1M worth of pro bono communications services that have been provided to women and POC-led startups.

Founded in July 2020 in partnership with Harlem Capital Partners, DMC is now made up of eight marketing and communications agencies—Cheer Partners, [SourceCode Communications](#), Superbolt, [Peppercomm](#), [Clarity](#), [Racepoint](#)



[Global](#), Praytell and Max Borges Agency. To date, the DMC has supported more than 20 clients across such industries as healthcare, insurtech and the future of work.

**JGB & Associates** announces a strategic partnership with **Cornerstone Government Affairs**. JGB was launched by former Forbes Tate and Holland & Knight partner John Buscher, who specializes in the areas of surface and air transportation, technology, banking, taxation, tech/IT, labor, appropriations and homeland security, and has an expertise in judiciary issues. He has served as a liaison between clients and Democratic members of Congress, congressional staffers and special interest groups.

**Miami Social Marketing** merges with **Kreps PR & Marketing** (a BrandStar company) and rebrands as KrepsSocial. Miami Social president and founder Liza Gallardo Walton will serve as president of KrepsSocial, joined by her staff of five. The merger expands Kreps PR's offerings throughout South Florida and the Northeast, adding in-house social media to BrandStar's TV and film production capabilities.

**Mari + Gold**, which will work with clients in the hospital, tourism and lifestyle industries, launches. The new firm will be a sister agency to San Diego-based Raindrop, and its ownership includes Raindrop CEO Jacques Spitzer, COO Adam Wagner and CCO Carrie Jones. Nicole Bushnell, a former Raindrop client, serves as Mari + Gold's president. It is launching with nearly 20 employees, many of whom are coming from Raindrop.

## **OREGON SEEKS PR IN MOVE VS. INFANT DEATH**

The Oregon Health Authority is looking for communications partners to develop “culturally specific, local safe sleep awareness campaigns” as it works to reduce the number of Sudden Unexplained Infant Deaths.



About 40 Oregon babies die during their sleep every year, with instances of deaths among American Indian/

Alaska Native and non-Hispanic Black kids twice that of non-Hispanic White babies.

Because of the disparities in SUID deaths by race/ethnicity, Oregon wants to examine SUID “through the lens of structural inequity and historical trauma,” according to the RFP.

OHA plans to award up to five \$30K grants for targeted community-wide messaging to build a “cultural context of support for safe sleep behaviors and removing cultural barriers.”

That specific messaging will be tailored on health information developed by the Oregon Safe Sleep Coalition.

Proposals are due May 23 at the OregonBuys portal.

[Read the RFP \(PDF\)](#).

## **TRIMBLE EXITS WH FOR PRECISION REBOUND**

Cameron Trimble has returned to Precision as executive VP after leaving his digital engagement director job at the White House, where he focused outreach to celebrities, influencers and digital media outlets.



**Cameron Trimble**

During Joe Biden’s presidential campaign, Trimble was national director of African American paid media, overseeing the largest-ever advertising investment in Black media for a presidential candidate.

During his first run at Precision, Trimble was a principal on its communications team.

Earlier, he was senior public affairs director at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and communications director for Texas Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson.

## **SUNSTAR’S MURPHY MOVES TO ALLSPRING**

Melissa Murphy, executive VP at Sunstar Strategic, has joined Allspring Global Investments as head of PR.

She worked more than 21 years at the Alexandria-based financial PR firm, crafting strategies for asset management clients.



**Melissa Murphy**

Murphy began her PR career at Strong Investments.

Allspring, which has more than 450 investment pros, is based in Charlotte. It has more than \$540B in assets under management.

In her new position, Murphy is reporting to Debbi Tippet, Allspring’s head of corporate communications.

## **COTY’S JUARISTI JOINS BEAUTY HEALTH CO.**

The Beauty Health Company has named Amy Juaristi head of corporate affairs, a newly created role. Juaristi will lead the development, advancement and execution of the company’s strategic communications and public affairs strategy.

Juaristi most recently led corporate affairs in the Americas for Coty. Prior to Coty, she led external communications at Zocdoc and Chobani, and has worked at Weber Shandwick and Hill & Knowlton.

“Amy is one of the best at her craft. Her experience telling the stories of leading, high-growth brands makes her ideally suited for this role,” said BeautyHealth president and CEO Andrew Stanlieck.



**Amy Juaristi**

## **ENG TO PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY**

People for the American Way has hired Na Eng as chief communications officer. Eng was most recently director of communications at the McKnight Foundation.

Before that, she was a producer at CNBC and PBS, and senior communications officer at Mercy Corps, a global humanitarian aid organization.

In her new role, Eng will design a video and digital content strategy for the organization. “Her sharp instincts for storytelling and narrative shaping will be an invaluable asset for us,” said People for the American Way president and CEO Ben Jealous.



**Na Eng**

## **MEDIA MANEUVERS**

**Bloomberg** is launching Bloomberg UK, which is meant to compete with such British outlets as *The Financial Times* and *The Sunday Times*. The new platform will include a website, a video series on British newsmakers, a podcast and a summit on the future of British business. “Our goal is to become the main destination for business and financial news in Britain,” Bloomberg editor-in-chief John Micklethwait wrote in a piece on Bloomberg.com. Out of Bloomberg’s approximately 400,000 subscribers, more than 40 percent are outside the US, with Britain constituting its second-largest market.

**National Geographic Media** signs up Expedia Group global head of editorial and entertainment Nathan Lump as editor-in-chief. Before coming to Expedia in 2019, Lump worked at such publications as *Travel + Leisure*, *Condé Nast Traveler* and the *New York Times*. In his new role, Lump will manage the content strategy of the company’s editorial team. He will also work to extend the reach of Nat Geo Media’s storytelling across The Walt Disney Company and its customers.

**My Code**, a digital media platform that allows advertisers to invest in minority-owned and led publishers, creators, and producers, acquires a majority ownership interest in Hispanic news and information company **Impremedia**. Impremedia CEO Iván Adaime will continue to lead the company’s media brands, which include *La Opinión*, *El Diario*, *La Raza* and *La Opinión de la Bahía*, along with digital media outlets and lifestyle brands that reach 35 million users each month. All of Impremedia’s employees have been asked to continue with the company.

# COMMENTARY



**Joe Biden strode into Washington** hoping to emulate his hero Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who rallied a dispirited country and lifted it from the depths of the Great Depression.

Taking the oath of office in the midst of a pandemic and the aftermath of four years of national dysfunction and a

Donald Trump-inspired insurrection attempt, Biden unveiled New Deal II designed to put America back on track.

In hindsight, Biden's \$1.9B American Rescue Plan turned out to be a massive overreach.

It flooded federal dollars into an economy that was being squeezed by product shortages and supply chain issues, triggering one of the highest inflation rates in years.

Virginia Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger said it best in a comment about the 2021 election that resulted in key unexpected losses for Democrats. "Nobody elected him to be FDR, they elected him to be normal and stop the chaos" following the Trump White House.

Biden, though, is turning out to be a half FDR, whose "arsenal of democracy" helped defeat Nazi Germany.

FDR signed the Lend-Lease Act in 1941 to send weapons to Britain to help it fight Hitler's war machine. It was later extended to the Soviet Union.

Biden signed an updated version of the Lend-Lease Act called the "Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022," which also covers nations in Eastern Europe.

Fittingly, he signed the Act on May 9, the same day that tail-between-his-legs Vladimir Putin addressed the Victory Day parade in Red Square.

Putin badly underestimated America's president. He viewed him as weak following the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. Biden now says the Russian invasion of Ukraine won't stand and that our arsenal of democracy will provide Zelensky with whatever his country needs.

FDR is proud of Joe.

**One of my pet peeves about PR firms** is when they attempt to distance themselves from objectionable client behavior by saying they had nothing to do with that activity.

Take the current controversy regarding SKDK and its now-former longtime client Starbucks. SKDK is noted for being the White House farm system for communications talent.

President Biden announced May 5 that Anita Dunn, partner and founding member of SKDK, is rejoining his team to plot strategy and guide messaging leading up to the midterm elections.

She was senior advisor to Biden and Kamala Harris during the presidential campaign and joined Team Biden to work on the transition. Dunn returned to SKDK earlier this year.

Working for the coffee chain, which is trying to stave off union organizing drives, was bad optics for SKDK, as Biden takes pride in his role as the most pro-labor president in years.

The president and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh had a meeting at the White House earlier this month with labor leaders, including a rep from Starbucks Workers United.

Though SKDK says it had nothing to do with Starbucks on union matters, it cut ties with the company in April.

Starbucks begs to differ, maintaining that it wasn't SKDK that killed the relationship.

The SKDK/Starbucks flap comes on the heels of another Democratic firm, Global Strategy Group, taking heat for repping Amazon as it attempted to defeat an organizing drive at its JFK8 warehouse in Staten Island.

Like SKDK, GSG said it had nothing to do with Amazon's union-busting work. But it did say that being involved with Amazon in any way was a mistake. GSG deserves credit for that.

In contrast, the Starbucks farewell statement from SKDK, which is part of Mark Penn's Stagwell, said it "has great admiration for the company."

I don't think Joe and Marty share that admiration.

**China sinks to a new PR low.** Hong Kong security forces arrested 90-year-old Cardinal Joseph Zen, a longtime champion of freedom of expression and religion, on May 11 under its draconian security laws that went into effect in 2020.

He was charged with "collusion with foreign forces" for his role as a trustee of the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, which aids jailed pro-democracy Hong Kongers. He was released on bail.

"Arresting a 90-year-old cardinal for his peaceful activities has to be a shocking new low for Hong Kong," Maya Wang, researcher of China for Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

The Kairos Co., a Glendale-based California PR firm, has publicized the arrests of Zen and three other activists.

It released a May 12 statement from Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, who called the arrests "a gross violation of human rights that must serve as a wake-up call."

Rev. Johnnie Moore, former senior VP-communications at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, founded Kairos Co.

**The boss is watching you.** The media abound with stories about companies offering goodies to employees in desperate bids to keep them from jumping ship.

Since there are apparently two jobs available to anyone who wants a new gig, companies roll out red carpets to lure new workers.

There's also a dark side to the death of corporate loyalty: companies don't trust the people that are working for them.

[The Economist ran a story May 10](#) about the "era of the hyper-surveilled office."

It reported that 60 percent of the more than 1,000 US companies surveyed used spyware to snoop on workers. Another 17 percent are considering it.

New York State offers some relief for paranoid workers who are ready to search for corporate bugs.

As of May 7, big companies in The Empire State are required to inform employees if their phone, email and Internet activity is being monitored.

But what about that camera in the corner flowerpot?

—Kevin McCauley